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End of the Year Message

December 20, 2007

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Closing Thoughts for 2007



I am pleased to report that the holiday spirit is alive and well in Yonkers.

During the past few weeks I have participated in four public menorah lighting ceremonies and a dozen tree-lighting ceremonies with a few Kwanzaa invites still to come. I love how Yonkers embraces people of all religions and cultures, especially when joining

neighbors in celebration.

December also marks the celebration of Human Rights Day. This year I was pleased to honor the Gorton High School's Mock Trial Team at the Westchester Human Rights Breakfast on December 11. There, our State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins was also honored for her integrity and hard-work. Congratulations, Andrea.

We have had a flurry of legislative activity along with the first snowfall. We made Yonkers history by landmarking the Wilson-Eyre estate [on 575 North Broadway](#) at our last Council meeting. I want to thank all of those who spoke out on the issue and helped make it happen.

Next comes the Demolition Review Ordinance hearing and vote, as well as important parkland alienation resolutions at the upcoming City Council meeting on January 8. I encourage everyone to attend, speaking out on not only the Demolition Review Ordinance, which calls for a demolition permit delays on houses 75 years and older until cleared by the City's Landmarks Board in an effort to keep Yonkers history alive, but also on another important piece of legislation--making permanent the seasonal leaf blower ban to improve our air quality. Please call the City Clerk by 3 p.m. that day to add your name to the list of speakers, 377-6020.

In other January news, the Council looks forward to Struever Fidelco Cappelli's (SFC) response to the Council's comments on the pDEIS (preliminary draft environmental impact statement) for the downtown revitalization project. If all goes well, it may be possible to accept the January pDEIS as complete and begin the long-awaited discussion on the substance of SFC's proposal for Downtown Yonkers.

The public will also have an opportunity to learn about the Alexander Street Master Plan at a 5:30 p.m. meeting of the Yonkers Community Development Agency (CDA) on Thursday, December 20.

It is possible that our deliberations in 2008 will have the greatest impact upon the built environment of Downtown Yonkers in this Century since City Hall was constructed in 1908.

Excelsior: Onward and upward!

Breaking News



**Mayor
Amicone
Vetoes
the
Living
Wage
Bill**

Santa Greet's Mayor Amicone at Hearing

Yonkers workers are not calling it a Wonderful Life. Rather, it's the Miracle on Getty Square that never happened.

And just one week before Christmas no less, our Mayor, Phil Amicone, vetoed the Living Wage Bill for the second time. This round came after his November 28 public hearing when Santa Claus "himself" appeared to deliver more than 1,000 postcards from Yonkers residents in support of the Living Wage and to give the Mayor a lump of coal in case he decided not to be "good."

What's next? We are analyzing the [Mayor's veto message](#) and will work with him to jointly craft a piece of legislation that will address his concerns but still have teeth.

Version two of the bill calls for all business entities receiving at least \$150,000 in government benefits for doing business in Yonkers pay their workers a minimum of \$11.85 per hour plus \$1.50 for health benefits. The Mayor still claims that it will add millions to the City budget but this doesn't factor in increased tax revenue from both city income tax and increased sales tax from workers who will spend earnings in Yonkers.

With all of the exciting development going on, now is the time to act. More than 10,000 families in Yonkers make less than the County poverty rate of \$25,000 a year which is the annual salary of someone working 40 hours a week at \$11.85 per hour.

These are the very people whose livelihoods depend on the development and the very people who the developers need to help make it happen.

I will keep you posted on the progress of this important piece of legislation.

Leaf Blower Ban Vetoed

As you may know, the Mayor also vetoed the seasonal Leaf Blower Ban that was recently approved unanimously by the Council after a one year trial basis last spring.



The bill bans leaf blowing from June 1 until September 30 as a way to improve air quality and to address health and environmental concerns.

This is the first piece of public health-based environmental policy to go before the Council since the formation of the Green Policy Task Force and the signing of the Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement. Yonkers is also setting a precedent for other municipalities proposing similar legislation.

Unlike the Living Wage veto, neither the Mayor or any of the Council members seems opposed to the bill. The veto was issued after some members of the lawn maintenance industry claimed to be unaware of our proposal to make the ban permanent. We encourage them, as well as the health professionals and residents who spoke at the last Committee of the Whole, to make their voices heard once again at this very important Council meeting on January 8.

Way To Go, Gorton!

Encouraging students to develop skills in writing and oral presentation, the First Moot Court Competition brought local high school students together on November 14 to put on their legal advocacy hats and make arguments in a real courtroom.

[Gorton High School](#) was not only one of the schools selected, it also took home "Best Written Presentation" in the competition involving Ardsley, Bronxville, Harrison, Pleasantville, Rye Neck, and Sleepy Hollow high schools.

All winners were honored at the Annual Human Rights Day Breakfast on December 11 in White Plains.

Alexander Street Master Plan Meeting

Please note that the Yonkers Community Development Agency is holding its upcoming meeting on Thursday, December 20 at 5:30 p.m. on the 4th floor of City Hall.

The meeting will consist of a presentation of the Alexander Street Urban Renewal Area Master Plan and Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement.

Click here to see a copy of the [Alexander Street Master Plan](#).

Get a Free Ride to College (And Other School News)



One lucky high school senior will be given a full, free ride to college by the [Tom Joyner Foundation](#) which supports Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

If you or someone you know is interested in applying, the application deadline is January 18, 2008 for graduating seniors. The website is www.blackamericaweb.com.

Note: [Applications](#) for Yonkers Public Schools' Academically Talented Programs are only being accepted until December 20, 2007 for enrollment in September 2008.

Attention Class of 2008. If you live in Yonkers, regardless of where you go to high school, here's a free book with your name on it! Click below to learn all about how to get a scholarship to college in the Scholarship Handbook, a 100+ page guide to selection criteria, application procedures, sponsoring organizations, and more. [» Scholarship Handbook](#)

Support Our Troops

Any time is a good time to reach out to our overseas soldiers, but there seems no better time than the holidays.

There are many ways we can help bring a little cheer to their lives and thanks to local organizations such as the Charles N. Bajart American Legion Post 1122 on 840 McLean Ave. Yonkers, (914-237-9311) who have a dedicated team of volunteers on hand, sending things just got easier. You can drop off items there directly or write a check to help cover the \$33 mailing expense per package to the American Legion, Support Our Troops, Margo Kopp, 372 Central Park Ave, Scarsdale, NY 10583. Put "Support Our Troops" in the subject line.



Here are some items on soldiers' wish lists that can be dropped off at the Legion. Eye drops, hand sanitizer, socks, phone cards (go to www.aafes.com or AT&T international), disposable razor blades, shaving cream, baby wipes, sunscreen, feminine hygiene products, batteries, board games such as Monopoly and Scrabble, canned soup or instant, hard candy, nail polish, magazines, books, puzzles, canned nuts, deodorant, hand lotion, sardines in a can, tuna fish, canned fruit, and more.

There's also a great [free website](#) that will send a card and personalized message from you to a soldier. Take two minutes to fill one out.

City Council Recognized for Leadership in Historic Preservation



I was invited to address the [New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation](#) this week at Philipse Manor Hall State Historic Site in Yonkers as part of their effort to prepare New York's 2007-2011 statewide historic preservation plan.

About 30 people from the region attended the meeting to give input regarding issues, threats, opportunities, and needs related to historic preservation.

Here in Yonkers, the City Council's

recent efforts to enact the Demolition Review Ordinance and its recent landmarking initiatives were applauded and touted as examples of how other municipalities can make positive changes in their communities by taking our lead.

It was an exciting moment!

There are so many reasons to preserve our past while building toward the future. It is my belief that through actions such as building rehabilitation, sensitive new construction and residential and commercial district revitalization, historic preservation can give new life to local landmarks, as well as increase property values, stabilize neighborhoods, create jobs, return vacant or underutilized properties to productive use such as affordable housing, retail or office space, and help restore community pride.

Our efforts were also recognized in a recent New York Times article ("[Council Vote Spares Historic House From Demolition](#)," Dec. 16) in which reporter Joseph Berger wrote that the Yonkers City Council "...highlights a more preservation-friendly approach..." to the City's historic structures.

Green Czar Wanted!

At the request of the City Council, the Department of Planning and Development is seeking a Manager for Environmental and Sustainable Development.



This person will be responsible for supporting the promotion and coordination of development activities within the City. The department leads the development initiative in this fast growing city. With 5 billion dollars in current and proposed development underway, Yonkers has more development per capita than any other locality in New York State.

Job Description: This position is responsible for the review of development plans and proposals; recommending implementation of sustainable design elements. The work includes reviewing environmental impact statements, managing the City's Brownfield program and recommending programs to reduce the City's environmental impact and improve quality of life. The incumbent will manage the environmental review process, conduct field studies/surveys relating to development applications and associated environmental impact statements, apply for grants to help improve environmental management, assist in the implementation of projects and policies, act as a department liaison to local environmental committees and recommend environmental policy.

Requirements: A) Graduation from a regionally accredited or New York State registered graduate school with a Master's Degree and two (2) years of experience in planning, engineering, architecture, real estate, economic development or a related field that involved working on environmental/sustainable development programs; or B) Graduation from a regionally accredited or New York State registered four year college or university with a Bachelor's Degree and four (4) years of experience as described in (A); or C) Graduation from a regionally accredited or New York State registered two year college or university with an Associate's Degree and six (6) years of experience as described in (A) and (B). Contact Edna Colombos, Department of Human Resources, City Hall, 40 South Broadway, Yonkers, NY 10701 Fax: 914-377-6897, edna.colombos@cityofyonkers.com. Feel free to contact me or my Green Policy Task Force Coordinator, Samantha Wapnick, for background or further information.

email: chuck.lesnick@cityofyonkers.com

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